

A Comparative Study Of Nominative And Accusative Cases In Urdu And English

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Abstract

The study aims to explore the similarities and differences between the nominative and accusative cases in English and Urdu, with a focus on how they are used in practical contexts. The study employs Chomsky's Case theory (1981) to examine the characteristics of nouns and determine whether they fall under the nominative or accusative case in any given language. In addition to the case theory, qualitative methods and descriptive content analysis are used to analyze Urdu and English sentences. The researchers have used their own intuitions while collecting the data. The results show that in Urdu, the case markers are generally added to the end of the noun or pronoun that they modify, whereas in English, the case markers are usually separate words that come before or after the noun or pronoun. Despite these distinctions, both languages use case markers to indicate grammatical information about the connections between nouns and pronouns in a sentence. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the Urdu sentences and their English translations which shows that positioning of nominative case is almost the same in Urdu and English languages but accusative has different positions in Urdu and English. Accusative case comes after verb in English but in Urdu it comes before verb.

Keywords: *Nominative case, Accusative case, Urdu and English, Chomsky's case theory.*

1. Introduction

The case system is an essential component of a language, which tells us how a word fits within a phrase grammatically. Both Urdu and English have unique case systems, and comparing these two can provide important insights into how different languages express meaning and construct sentences. The purpose of this study is to examine the similarities and differences between the nominative and accusative cases in Urdu and English, with an emphasis on their application in real-world situations.

According to Barry J. Blake's book "Case" (Blake, 2001), the term "Case" is described as a system used to show the relationship between dependent nouns and their heads. The term "case" refers to the morphology connected to grammatical connections. The distinction between cases and thematic roles is crucial since the former are morphological categories and the latter are grounded in semantics. Thematic roles indicate the meaning of an NP within a sentence, whereas cases show its grammatical function.

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The analysis of language structures in comparison offers insightful information on the complexities of language learning and the difficulties encountered by language learners. We examined the nominative and accusative cases in two different languages, Urdu and English, in this research paper. The syntactic roles of nouns and pronouns inside sentences are largely determined by these cases. We want to shed light on the differences and similarities between the two languages by contrasting the characteristics and use patterns of certain examples in Urdu and English. This will help us better comprehend both language specific and universal phenomena.

Urdu is an Indo-Aryan language which is spoken predominantly in Pakistan and parts of India, with a sophisticated case system that makes it possible to describe grammatical connections precisely. Conversely, English, a Germanic language that is widely spoken around the world, uses a more restricted case system that yet retains elements of its past inflectional morphology. We can investigate the similarities and differences between the nominative and accusative cases in these two languages by looking at how they function inside their own grammatical contexts.

- The research objective of the study is to explore the distinctive characteristics of the nominative and accusative cases in Urdu and English.

To accomplish our research goals, we will use theoretical frameworks such as Chomsky's Case theory, which offers a comprehensive knowledge of case systems and their link to syntactic structures. In order to shed light on the grammatical contexts and usage patterns of the nominative and accusative cases, we will also employ qualitative analytic approaches to look at a corpus of sentences from both languages.

We hope that this comparative study will add to the amount of knowledge already available on case systems and also benefit linguists, educators, and language learners. The results of this study can have an impact on translation studies, language pedagogy, and our general knowledge of language typology. We strive to enhance our comprehension of these important linguistic occurrences and their influence on language learning and usage by carefully examining the nominative and accusative cases in Urdu and English.

Case theory was initially formulated within the framework of the Government and Binding theory, and proposed that every noun phrase should have a certain attribute. The sentence containing the noun phrase would be grammatically incorrect if it did not demonstrate this feature. The nominative case and the accusative case -also known as the objective case- are the two cases in the English language that are commonly acknowledged and accepted (Bosque et al., 2002). Case theory classifies cases as either nominative or accusative, depending on whether they are related to the subjects or the objects of sentences. (Chomsky, 1981).

Chomsky (1981) states that the subject of a tensed phrase is the only one designated with the nominative case. The subject can always take on a nominative case in a tensed sentence, but it cannot in a non-tensed one. In these situations, the verb is forced to give the embedded verb's subject the accusative case, resulting in the accusative-infinitive construction. (Chomsky, 1981).

Languages exhibit variations in terms of their argument structures, comprising lexical and syntactic criteria associated with certain instances. Languages vary in how verb arguments are presented, whether they be subjects, objects, or oblique arguments. The nominative case on the noun phrase and person or number agreement on the finite verb are used in many languages to indicate the subject. This structure is only partially followed by Urdu, as finite verb agreement is only seen in nominative determiner phrases. This restriction is typical in languages where

the verbal complex that consists of the verb, tense, and aspect inflections reflects a single set of agreement patterns, such as number, gender, or person. (Hines et al., 2009).

Furthermore, Case is innate in verbs and prepositions but is not phonetically comprehended. Case is usually assumed to be nominative in English verbs and prepositions. Using a thorough and in-depth examination of several phrase forms, this study compares sentences in Urdu and English. Chomsky's case theory is applied to the analysis of verbs, prepositions, adjectives, nouns, and the accusative and nominative cases. The grammatical structure of Urdu, which is one of the eighteen official languages of India and is spoken as the national language of Pakistan, is subject-object-verb (SOV). In Urdu, an ergative case is used for non-nominative instances. With a few complimentizer outliers, it is clear from examining the language's clause structure that it primarily uses a head-final structure. In Urdu, unlike English, there is no definite determiner; instead, specificity is denoted by the accusative case "ko." In Urdu, adjectives can also agree with the noun in terms of gender and number. Quantifiers can appear as pre-nominal elements, although they sometimes arise post-nominally.

In contrast to other grammatical categories or parts of speech, like verbs, adjectives, and prepositions, the nominative and accusative properties of Urdu have not been thoroughly studied. The purpose of this research is to investigate the grammatical properties of Urdu in relation to English. This analysis of the similarities and differences between Urdu and English was motivated by the fact that the sole nominative and accusative features have not been fully examined in either language.

In order to precisely examine the similarities and differences between the nominative and accusative features of English and Urdu, this research is limited to Chomsky's case theory. The major goal is to help language learners comprehend both languages more clearly.

2. Literature Review

A noun is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a term that is used to name or indicate an individual, location, or object. There are two types of nouns: functional and semantic. Nouns are content words that may be used to refer to an object, person, location, attribute, action, or quality semantically. Nouns are members of the word class that can function as a verb's subject or object. (Dictionary, 2007).

In English and a few other languages, subject status is expressed using the nominative case as the standard. However, the nominative case does not serve as the exclusive marker for grammatical subjects in languages where there are alternative case options. (Butt & King, 2004).

Dayal and Mahajan (2004) argue that there are subjects in Hindi and Urdu that are not just nominative. Certain verb formulations in these languages frequently need the dative marker "-koo" or additional post-positional subjects. A finite verb's subject may be followed by location phrases such as "-par" (on) or "-mein" (in), as well as the genitive case marker "-kaa" and the instrumental case markers "-see" or "-sai." In some passive sentence structures, the agent phrase with the genitive "-see" demonstrates subject qualities and performs similarly to "with" or "by" in English. Furthermore, in finite phrases with perfective aspect, the subjects of the majority of transitive verbs frequently include the ergative postposition "-nee". Ergative cases are unaffected by auxiliary verbs, and certain intransitive verbs permit ergative subjects in situations that are analogous to those of transitive verbs. Furthermore, in constructs using exceptional case marking, some non-finite clauses may contain dative subjects like participial subjects or genitive subjects like infinitives and participles. (Blake, 2001).

According to Butt and King (2004), nominals that are a part of noun and verb complex predicates as well as nominative direct objects are widespread in Hindi and Urdu. The nominative case in these languages has a direct morphological form and denotes the lack of a post-position. With post-positions, the "oblique" morphological form becomes required. (Butt & King, 2004).

Butt and King (2004) states that the Urdu language includes six cases, such as the Nominative (which is the same as in English), Accusative with the marker "ko," Ergative with "ne," Instrumental with "se," and Locative with "me," "tuk," "per," and so on.

Durrani (2006) conducted an analysis of Urdu and determined that it is a split-ergative language. Three crucial elements formed the basis of his evaluation: component order, verb agreement, and case indicators. Durrani found that the existence of ergative case marking in Urdu causes the split pattern. Perfective tense requires the ergative case marker in order to avoid nominative case marking on subjects. But in other situations, agents are usually labelled with the nominative case (Durrani, 2006).

Moreover, there is a division in Urdu between the perfect and imperfect aspects. Whereas the imperfect aspect uses accusative marking, the perfect aspect uses an ergative scheme to establish verb arguments. When transitive and ditransitive verbs are in the perfective aspect, Urdu also has an ergative case on agents. Therefore, case markers more especially, the negative marker which appears on the subjects of transitive verbs in perfective morphology are the main source of split-ergativity in Urdu. (Durrani, 2006).

Comparing the nominative and accusative qualities of the English and Urdu languages, however, has not received much attention in the literature. When studying English as a second or foreign language, individuals can significantly improve their understanding of English grammatical structures by being aware of these variations.

3. Research Methodology

A variety of English and Urdu sentences are analyzed in this study using the content analysis research method and a qualitative descriptive methodology. Primarily used as an exploratory technique, qualitative research seeks to comprehend underlying motivations and viewpoints. It dives further into new concepts and beliefs while offering insightful analysis of the current issue (Zeb, 2019).

For the examination of textual material, qualitative content analysis is a frequently used research approach. Grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, and historical research are a few other techniques that may be applied. In order to understand the content and contextual meaning of the text under study, researchers use qualitative content analysis concentrate on the distinctive features of language as a communication tool (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The aim of content analysis is to acquire knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being examined (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

The researchers have used their own intuitions in collecting and analyzing the data as Noam Chomsky states that if you are a native speaker of a language you don't need others' opinions for the data analysis you can rely on your own analysis (Chomsky, 2014).

4. Theoretical Framework

The study makes use of the "Case Theory," which was created in the 1950s and 1960s by linguists such as Noam Chomsky. It is a theory of language that attempts to explain how various

languages indicate the grammatical functions of words in a sentence using cases. The hypothesis is predicated on the notion that various languages assign cases to words in different ways, and that these distinctions may be utilized to determine a language's case system. Cases are allocated to words inside sentences based on an analysis of how word order, syntax, and semantics affect these assignments. This framework can be valuable in identifying the case system of a language, as well as in understanding how cases are used to carry meaning within a sentence.

As per Chomsky (1981), case assignment is based on the notion of government, predominantly about the nominative and accusative cases. The accusative case is usually assigned to the verb's complement, while the nominative case is designated for the specifier. Noun phrases are generally considered to own inherent case, meaning that there must always be a specific case value assigned, either nominative or accusative, as per outdated terminology.

Furthermore, an NP (noun phrase) must have a defined place inside the sentence structure, which is established by case markers, in accordance with Chomsky's Case theory. Nouns and adjectives cannot designate cases in a sentence; only verbs and prepositions may assign nominative and accusative cases to non-plural nouns (NPs). In English, verbs usually follow the nominative case, although a verb or a preposition may follow the accusative case. The nominative and accusative cases are merged in Urdu, nevertheless, and they come after the verb or an indirect object. English only has two cases, but Urdu contains additional cases like ergative, genitive, and dative that are absent from English. In order to clarify crucial grammatical issues and provide useful strategies for English language learners learning it as a second or foreign language, this study intends to compare and contrast these two languages.

5. Data Analysis

Some examples of sentences in Urdu that use the case system, along with some possible comparative examples in English are used for the data analysis.

Nominative Case

When an NP, which can be a noun or pronoun, acts as the subject of a sentence without any case marker, it usually takes on the Nominative case. To provide an example, in the sentence below, both “Main” and “I” function as the subjects without any case marker, indicating their role as the Nominative case.

Urdu: Main kitaab parhta hoon.

English: I read the book.

In this sentence, the pronouns “Main” and “I” act as the subjects and take the nominative case. It indicates the doer of the action (reading), and no specific case marker is used.

Some more examples of Urdu sentences with their English translations to help illustrate the use of the nominative case are given below:

Urdu: Main Lahore ja raha hoon.

English: I am going to Lahore.

Explanation: In this sentence, the pronoun “Main” (I) is in the nominative case as it functions as the subject of the verb “ja raha hoon” (am going).

Urdu: Woh kitab parh rahi hai.

English: She is reading the book.

Explanation: In this sentence, the pronoun “Woh” (she) is in the nominative case as it serves as the subject of the verb “parh rahi hai” (is reading).

Urdu: Tum meray dost ho.

English: You are my friend.

Explanation: In this sentence, the pronoun “Tum” (you) is in the nominative case as it functions as the subject of the verb “ho” (are).

Urdu: Hum log maze kar rahe hain.

English: We are having fun.

Explanation: In this sentence, the pronoun “Hum log” (we) is in the nominative case as it serves as the subject of the verb “maze kar rahe hain” (are having fun).

In these examples, the nominative case is used to mark the subject of the sentence, representing the doer or performer of the action

Accusative Case

In addition, when a noun or pronoun acts as the object of a sentence without being governed by a case marker, it is assigned the Accusative case. This is evident in the given example where “kitaab” and “book” function as the objects of the sentence, indicating their Accusative case.

Urdu: Mera dost kitaab parhta hai.

English: My friend reads the book.

Here, the noun phrases “Mera dost” and “My friend” function as the subjects of the sentence and take the nominative case, while the noun “kitaab” and “book” function as the direct object and take the accusative case. The accusative case marker is not used in this particular sentence.

Accusative Case with Case Marker

Urdu: Main ne kitaab ko parha hai.

English: I have read the book.

In this sentence, the pronoun “Main” and “I” serve as the subject, while the noun “kitaab” (book) acts as the direct object and takes the accusative case. The accusative case marker “-ko” is used to indicate that the book is the object being read.

The description above is correct so far but there are nouns that show overt inflection for accusative case which is different from nominative case. In Urdu, consonant ending nouns, especially the feminine ones don't inflect for case and it becomes hard to claim that one form is in nominative case and the other is in accusative case. Look at the examples below:

1) Mera dost kitab parhta hai.

(My friend reads book)

2) Meri kitab gum gayi.

(My book got lost)

In the first sentence, “kitab” occurs as the direct object, but in sentence 2, it is in subject position. According to our assumption, “kitab” in the first sentence is in accusative case, but in the second, it is in nominative case. But how do we know this? The form “kitab” remains unchanged in both sentences which can create confusion that in Urdu, all nouns have just one form; the nominative one.

Let us Compare the following sentences and try to explain the nominals occurring in object position.

In Urdu, there are nouns that exhibit overt inflection for the accusative case, which differs from the nominative case. However, in English, some nouns remain the same regardless of their case. This creates a challenge in determining whether a noun is in the nominative or accusative case based solely on its form. Let us analyze some sentences to understand the behavior of nominals occurring in the object position:

Urdu: GhoRa doRaa.

English: The horse ran.

Explanation: In this sentence, “GhoRa” is in the nominative case, as it is the subject of the verb “doRaa” (ran).

Hum ne ghoRa doRayaa.

English: We rode the horse.

Explanation: In this sentence, “GhoRa” is in the accusative case, as it is the direct object of the verb “doRayaa” (rode).

Hum ne ghoRe ko doRayaa.

English: We harnessed the horse.

Explanation: In this sentence, “ghoRe” is in the accusative case, as it is the direct object of the verb "doRayaa" (harnessed). The accusative case marker “ko” is used here.

In the sentences above, the acceptability of the nominal in the object position depends on whether it is in the accusative case or not.

Sentences below marked with ‘*’ are not grammatically acceptable because the nominals are not in the appropriate case. Let us explain the examples below:

*Hum ne ghoRe doRayaa

This sentence is not acceptable because “ghoRe” should come with the accusative case “ko” when it functions as the direct object.

*Main woh milaa

This sentence is not acceptable because “woh” should be in the accusative case as the direct object.

*Main us milaa

This sentence is not acceptable because “us” should be with the accusative case marker to function as the direct object.

Main us say milaa

This sentence is acceptable because “us” is in the accusative case, marked by the postposition “say,” indicating that it is the direct object.

In Urdu, the distinction between the nominative and accusative cases can be determined by the context, sentence structure, and case markers. While some nouns may not display overt inflection for case, the role they play in the sentence can still be identified through word order and other grammatical markers.

These examples demonstrate how the nominative and accusative cases function in Urdu sentences compared to their English translations. The study explored the usage patterns, morphological markers, and semantic implications of these cases in both languages, facilitating a deeper understanding of their similarities and differences.

From above examples it is quite clear that positioning of nominative case is almost the same in Urdu and English languages but accusative has different positions in Urdu and English. Accusative case comes after verb in English but in Urdu it comes before verb.

6. Conclusion

There are nominative and accusative similarity and difference between the English and Urdu languages. In the nominative case, nouns and pronouns that perform acts or participate in activities are categorized as nominative in both languages. But there are other cases in Urdu as well, including dative and ergative, that are absent from English. These cases are shown on the nouns in Urdu.

Furthermore, nominatives in relation to verbs are indicated according to person, number, and gender in both Urdu and English. Additionally, there are distinctions between how the two languages' accusative cases relate to verbs and prepositions. It would be easier to comprehend grammar in both Urdu and English if one is aware of the nominative and accusative functions in each language. It can also assist in the development of effective lesson plans for English language learners.

The comparison of the case systems in Urdu and English concludes with the finding that while there are certain parallels between the two languages, there are also notable variances. While case markers in English often consist of independent words that appear before or after the noun or pronoun they modify, in Urdu they are typically appended to the end of the noun or pronoun that they modify. Despite these differences, both languages utilize case markers to express grammatical information about the relationships between nouns and pronouns in a sentence.

7. Recommendation

Variations of genitive and dative cases in Urdu and English might be investigated further. Additionally, a comparison between English and the nominative and accusative features of several regional languages spoken in Pakistan, such as Pushto, Balti, Saraiki, Pothohari, Hindko, and others, might be studied. Given that English is spoken as a second language in Pakistan, being aware of these traits may make it easier for people to overcome their barriers to learning the language.

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